

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 AID-20 IGA-02 DRC-01

/137 W

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P R 011051Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2882

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7081

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, KS, KN

SUBJ: NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION VISIT TO THAILAND

REF.: A. BANGKOK 6873

B. STATE 86122

C. SEOUL 2632

D. BANGKOK 6768

SUMMARY: A NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION, IN BANGKOK FROM APRIL 26 TO MAY 1, SPENT ITS TIME ON TRADE TALKS AND SIGHT-SEEING RATHER THAN POLITICAL INITIATIVES. THE DELEGATION MADE A COURTESY CALL ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT NEITHER SIDE RAISED THE SUBJECT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, DISCUSSION OF WHICH THE FOREIGN MINISTER LATER PUBLICLY SAID IS PREMATURE. THE ROK EMBASSY HERE REGRETS THE THAI DECISION TO WELCOME THE DELEGATION, BUT DOES NOT THINK POLITICAL RELATIONS WILL DEVELOP RAPIDLY. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT
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THE RTG WILL PROCEED SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY IN ANY CON-

TACTS WITH NORTH KOREA. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION ARRIVED IN BANGKOK FRIDAY, APRIL 26, AND SPENT MOST OF THE WEEKEND SIGHT-SEEING IN BANGKOK. THE DELEGATION CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA, COMMERCE MINISTER CHANCHAI LITHAWON, AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT OP WASURAT APRIL 29. THEY VISITED A THAI GUNNY SACK FACTORY APRIL 30. ACCORDING TO THE ROK CHARGE', THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART BANGKOK FOR PYONGYANG WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 1, VIA CALCUTTA AND PEKING.

2. MFA UNDERSECRETARY PHAN WANNAMATHI TOLD CHARGE' APRIL 30 THAT THE NORTH KOREANS EXPLAINED THEIR GOVERNMENT'S SIX YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN, PYONGYANG'S FOREIGN POLICY (NON-INTERFERENCE, ETC), AND THEIR VIEWS ON "CONFEDERATION" WITH THE ROK DURING THEIR COURTESY CALL ON CHARUNPHAN APRIL 29, BUT NEITHER SIDE RAISED THE SUBJECT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THE THAI HAD EXPECTED THE NORTH KOREANS TO BRING UP THIS TOPIC, AND HAD A VARIETY OF ANSWERS PREPARED TO PUT OFF ANY QUERIES REGARDING RELATIONS AT THIS TIME. THE CLOSEST THE NORTH KOREANS CAME TO THE SUBJECT TO EXTEND TO CHARUNPHAN THE GREETINGS OF THE NORTH KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER. SINCE THE CONVERSATION DID NOT INCLUDE POLICIAL RELATIONS, MFA OFFICIALS TOLD US THEY SAW NO OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THAILAND HOPED NORTH KOREA'S COMMUNIST ALLIES WOULD BE EQUALLY RESPONSIVE TOWARD IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH SOUTH KOREA.

3. THE ONLY TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED RELATED STRICTLY TO TRADE. THE RTG NEEDS FERTILIZER AND NORTH KOREA REPORTEDLY IS PREPARED TO SELL SOME TO THE THAI. THE RTG BELIEVES THAT THE NORTH KOREANS ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE PURCHASE OF THAI KENAF AND GUNNY SACKS. THE CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN TRADE DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT TRADE WILL DEVELOP IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THERE WAS A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGES IN FIELDS SUCH AS SPORTS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS DURING THE CALL ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT NO DEFINITE ARRANGEMENTS ENSUED.

4. IN HIS APRIL 29 PRESS CONFERENCE, CHARUNPHAN SAID THE TALKS WITH THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION HAVE CONCENTRATED ON TRADE AND THERE HAD BEEN NO DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL ISSUES. HE SAID THE NORTH KOREANS HAD INVITED THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE TO VISIT NORTH KOREA. IN RESPONSE TO REPORTER'S QUESTION, CHARUNPHAN SAID

IT IS TOO SOON TO TALK ABOUT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA, SINCE TRADE RELATIONS ARE JUST BEGINNING AND THE TWO COUNTRIES MUST FIRST DEVELOP MUTUAL CONFIDENCE.

5. THE LOCAL PRESS REPORTED THAT THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION HAD REQUESTED A VISIT WITH PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK, BUT THE RTG DENIED THE REQUEST BECAUSE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S HEAVY SCHEDULE. THE ROK COUNSELOR TOLD US THAT HIS EMBASSY HAS CONFIRMED THIS REPORT.

6. THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE ACTED AS HOST TO THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION. PHAN TOLD THE CHARGE' THAT SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS HAVE AVOIDED ATTENDING SOCIAL OR OTHER FUNCTIONS WITH THE NORTH KOREANS. THE THAI HAVE MADE EFFORTS TO KEEP THE KOREANS BUSY WITH SIGHTSEEING TOURS RATHER THAN POLITICS AND THE KOREANS RESPONDED WELL TO THESE DIVERSIONS. THE NORTH KOREANS' AUSTERE BEHAVIOR INITIALLY ANNOYED THE THAI, BUT THE NORTH KOREANS REPORTEDLY BECAME MORE RELAXED AS THE VISIT PROGRESSED.

7. THE NEW ROK AMBASSADOR, CHUN BYUNG KYU, ARRIVED IN BANGKOK APRIL 27. HE REPORTEDLY CAME AHEAD OF SCHEDULE BECAUSE OF THE NORTH KOREAN VISIT BUT HAS NOT YET PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS.

8. THE ROK CHARGE' TOLD US APRIL 30 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT "REGRETS" THE THAI DECISION TO WELCOME THE NORTH KOREAN DELEGATION BECAUSE THAILAND IS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH PYONGYANG OF THE 16 THAT FOUGHT WITH THE ROK DURING THE KOREAN WAR. (SIC) HE AGREES, HOWEVER, WITH OUR ANALYSIS THAT POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND NORTH KOREA WILL NOT DEVELOP RAPIDLY. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE ADDED THAT HE PLANS TO AVOID APPROACHING THE MFA ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE NEAR FUTURE SINCE HE THINKS SUCH AN APPROACH UNNECESSARY AND DOES NOT WANT TO EMBARRASS HIS THAI COUNTERPARTS.

9. COMMENT: WE REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THE RTG WILL PROCEED SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY IN ANY CONTACTS WITH NORTH KOREA. THE THAI ARE AWARE THAT ACTUAL TRADE WITH THE ROK IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO THAILAND THAN POTENTIAL TRADE WITH NORTH KOREA. THEY ARE INTERESTED IN FERTILIZER FROM ANY SOURCE, BUT WE DO NOT THINK THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY A GREAT POLITICAL PRICE FOR IT. WHEN THE CHARGE' MENTIONED TO MFA UNDERSECRETARY PHAEN APRIL 30 OUR CONCERN THAT THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ARE NOT RESPONDING TO OVERTURES FROM THE ROK AND OTHER NON-COMMUNIST GOVERN-

MENTS IN DIVIDED COUNTRIES, PHAEN REPLIED THAT HE WAS AWARE
OF THIS SITUATION. THE THAI ARE COGNIZANT OF THE NEED FOR
BALANCED INTERNATIONAL TREATMENT OF THE TWO KOREAS AND HAVE
STRONG REASONS OF THEIR OWN FOR GOING SLOWLY IN CONTACTS WITH
PYONGYANG.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RECOGNITION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, TRADE, TRADE VISITS, FERTILIZERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BANGKO07081
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740104-0221
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740583/aaaacwtg.tel
Line Count: 175
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <14 JAN 2003 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NORTH KOREAN TRADE DELEGATION VISIT TO THAILAND
TAGS: PFOR, TH, KS, KN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005